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ABSTRACT

Information has been compiled regarding present and former students at Harrisburg Area Community College (Pennsylvania). Topics included in this study are academic ability and achievement, family background, enrollment in the college by curricular area, students' evaluations of the college, activities of former students, and their evaluations of the college. This profile of students is the fifth in a series of five monographs written around the theme, "meeting the changing needs of students." (BB)

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MEETING THE CHANGING NEEDS OF STUDENTS: A Profile of Students

Monograph No. 5

ED038139

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PREFACE

The Harrisburg Area Community College will host a case study for the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in April 1970. In preparation, the faculty (through the Research and Development Committee) has elected to prepare five monographs focusing on how a new college has adapted its program to serve its students.

Recognizing that today's young people are different from previous generations, and that the Community College is a new kind of institution, the committee has chosen as a theme "Meeting the Changing Needs of Students." The five monographs are (1) College Governance, (2) Curriculum Development, (3) Variations in Methods of Instruction, (4) A Creative Approach to College Counseling, and (5) A Profile of Students.

No effort has been made to be comprehensive. Materials were selected for their interest or usefulness to others. Little self-evaluation has been written into the papers, but it has been a valuable by-product of their preparation.

Research and Development Committee

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Introduction

A number of studies have been completed, or are being completed, which attempt to describe the student body at the Harrisburg Area Community College. These studies include descriptions of characteristics, achievemer s, perceptions, and activities of current students, graduates, and non-persisting former students. The purpose of this monograph is to provide a composite description of the student body and former students so that members of the College community can better identify student needs and "meet the changing needs of students."

During the first year of the College (1964), information about students was limited to basic matriculation and enrollment data. In 1965, through participating in the American College Testing Program (ACT Program Class Profile Report), the College had available considerable information about its students. Soon thereafter, several studies were made to provide better initial course placement of students. These studies included simple scattergrams of achievement scores and course grades and the more sophisticated prediction studies provided by the ACT research program. In 1966, the College granted its first group of associate degrees. A study of students who transferred to senior colleges and universities followed. From 1966 to 1968, several studies were made relating to student characteristics and achievements.

Early in 1969, a systematic series of studies of current and former students was designed and implemented. centered with the Director of Research and Community Resources. These studies have attempted to be both broadly descriptive and analytical to the extent that student sub-groups were carefully examined. It is expected that additional studies of specific student sub-groups will cover employment patterns for career graduates, the earlier transfer graduates, the motivations and achievements of older students, and the academic persistence of developmental students.

Information in this monograph was taken from:

1. The American College Testing Program *Class Profile Report* for fall 1968 and for previous years (1). The ACT Profile for 1968 contained data from 724 students, mostly full-time matriculants of fall 1968. The ACT report under-represented the "special" student group who enrolled part-time and the "transfer" students who attended a college prior to enrolling at Harrisburg Area Community College.

2. *A Profile of Students,* a study of the on-campus student body during spring 1969 (4). This study is based upon data from 46 percent of the on-campus students who were enrolled during spring 1969. Respondents were found to be representative of the student body by sex, full-time or part-time status, and most curricular groups, but freshman students, developmental students, and "special" student groups appeared to be under-represented.
3. *A Profile of Graduates,* a study of the activities and perceptions of graduates who received their degrees from 1966 through 1968 (5).
4. *A Profile of Non-Persisting Students,* a study of the activities and perceptions of non-persisting students who matriculated from 1964 through fall 1966 (6).
5. A number of additional studies by members of the staff (2, 3, 7). While not minor in nature, they are used as minor sources to this document. They are included as references at the end of this monograph.

The information in this monograph has been assembled under these headings:

Who Are They?
- *Academic Ability and Achievement*
- *Demographic Information*
- *Educational Goals*
- *Curricular Enrollments*

What Do They Think?
- *Educational Goals and Personal Concerns*
- *Participation in Student Activities*
- *Evaluations of the College*

And After Harrisburg Area Community College?
- *Description of Former Students*
- *Employment*
- *Continued Education*
- *Evaluation of the College*

Need for Further Study

Relatively little tabulated material is contained in this monograph, but several illustrations are included. Numbers enclosed by parentheses refer to sources listed at the end of this monograph. Limited copies of several of these studies are available upon request.

Who Are They?

Academic Ability and Achievement

All who enroll at the College in a full-time schedule and who have not attended a prior college are required to complete the ACT test. The fall 1968 matriculant group earned ACT scores that were somewhat above the norms for two-year college students (1). ACT scores for this group ranged from a low of 18.1 in the English sub-test to a high of 20.2 in natural sciences. The mean ACT composite score was 19.2. Figure 1 is a profile of the mean ACT scores earned by entering students each year from 1965 through 1968. The several sub-scores did not vary appreciably until 1968, when each of the mean sub-scores rose noticeably above those for previous classes. These data suggest that 1968 freshmen are more able academically than previous freshmen at the College.

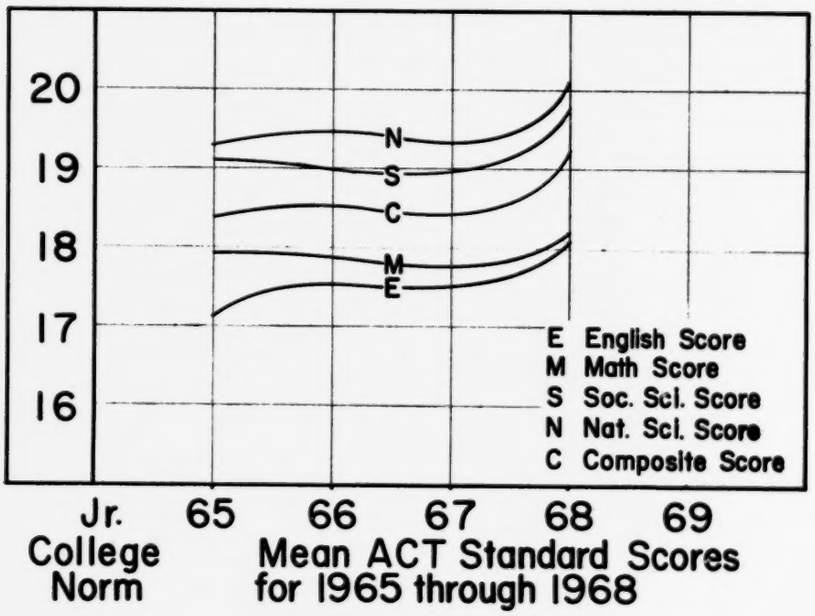

FIGURE 1

The high school backgrounds of students reflect considerable heterogeneity. Incoming students were drawn from each of the five high school quintiles – about 12 percent from the first (highest) and from the fifth (lowest) quintiles, and 30 percent from the middle fifth (7). Female students were noticeably more able than males, in terms of

high school achievement. Over one-half of the females and less than one-fourth of the males graduated in the upper two-fifths of their high school classes. Seventy percent of the entering students completed an academic curriculum in high school, and the remainder completed a commercial, general, or technical curriculum.

Demographic Information

Students come largely from the immediate tri-county metropolitan Harrisburg area. All but 14 percent live in one of the 22 school districts that sponsor the College, and all but one percent are official residents of Pennsylvania. Half of the students come from suburban areas, one-fourth from the central city, and the remaining one-fourth from farms or open country. Proportionally more males than females are from farm or open country, and proportionally more females are from suburban areas (1).

Of those students who provided information a substantial majority reported family incomes between $5,000 and $15,000. Figure 2 shows the distribution of family incomes for students taking the ACT examination during 1968 (1).

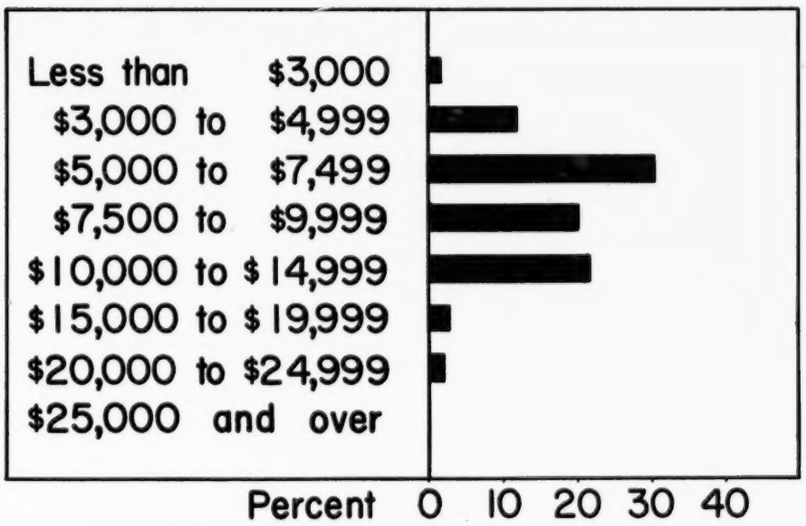

FIGURE 2 Distribution of Family Income for 1968 Matriculants.

The levels of parental education for students who attended the College reflect a broad range, as is typical of student bodies at other community colleges. Thirty percent of the mothers and 35 percent of the fathers terminated their education without completing high school, but 16 percent of the mothers and 26 percent of the fathers of students had some college education.

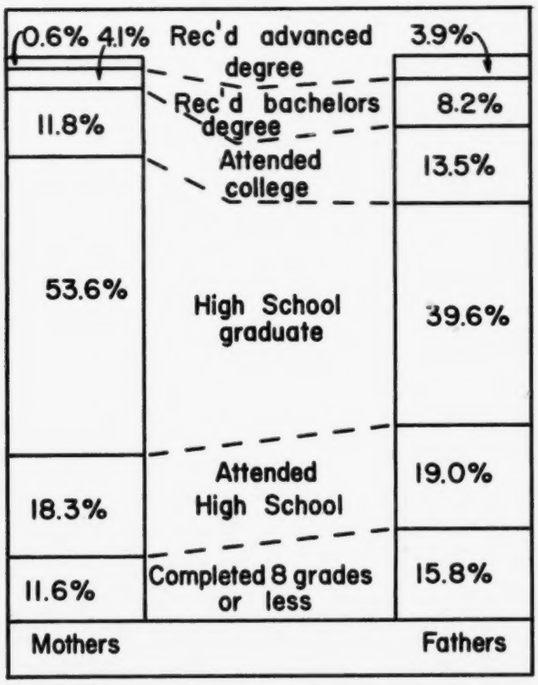

FIGURE 3

Educational level of parents

The student body at the College is a relatively diverse age group (4). One-half were ages 19 and 20, and nearly one-fourth were in the age range of 22 to 29. One-seventh were age 30 or over.

Nearly 70 percent of the 1968 matriculants intended to hold part-time employment in addition to attending classes, most of them from 10 to 20 hours per week (1). Over 80 percent indicated that they planned to live at home while attending the College, but the absence of housing on campus probably results in a much higher percentage actually living at home. Most students planned to bring a car to campus, and lack of adequate public transportation requires them to drive or arrange transportation with other students.

Educational Goals

Major considerations for choosing Harrisburg Area Community College were given by students, in rank order, as "special curriculum," "good faculty," and "high scholastic standards." Among practical considerations, major emphasis was on "location," "close to home," and "low cost." Eight-tenths of the enrolled students listed Harrisburg Area Community College as their first choice. Nearly one-half of the students wished to earn a bachelor's degree, and one-fourth aimed for a higher level of education. Only about one-fourth indicated a goal of completing just one or two years of college.

Curricular Enrollments

Most students at the College are enrolled in programs that lead directly to an associate degree. Exceptions are those enrolled as developmental students, guest students, and special students (part-time and off-campus). Certain students are enrolled in programs leading to a certificate of proficiency (rather than an associate degree) and requiring about one year of full-time study. However, these students are registered into regular curricular areas.

Table 1 shows the enrollments in the various curricular areas for the fall 1969 semester. Nearly half (46%) of the students are enrolled in transfer programs, over one-fourth (27%) in career programs, one-fifth special students, and under one-tenth are developmental students.

It is also of interest to note how enrollments in the several curricular areas have changed over the years. Enrollments in transfer programs have grown most rapidly, although career enrollments have risen considerably from 1968 to 1969. Enrollments in the developmental program are shown to have a low rate of growth; however, at least an equal number of developmental students have usually enrolled at the College during the summer session, and their numbers are not reflected in these figures. The rapid drop in special student enrollments from 1968 to 1969 reflects a variety of causes: a more advanced cut-off date for applications (compared to dates set for earlier years), and a reduction of off-campus enrollments at several locations.

TABLE 1

CURRICULAR ENROLLMENTS FOR FALL 1969 SEMESTER

Curriculum	Enrollments N	%
Transfer:		
Life Sciences	72	
Police Administration	93	
Engineering	72	
Education	540	
Communication and the Arts	119	
Math & Science	101	
Social Science	229	
Business Administration	258	
Total	1484	46.1
Career:		
Civil Technology	58	
Electronics Technology	50	
Drafting	104	
Electronic Service and Merchandising	19	
Electro Mechanical Technology	2	
Secretarial: Executive, Legal, Medical	95	
Office Studies	22	
Accounting	50	
Business Management	61	
Retailing	83	
Food Services	26	
Data Processing	122	
Nursing	56	
Mental Health Aide	9	
Public Service	27	
Police Management	78	
Corrections	16	
Total	878	27.3
Developmental	225	7.0
Guest	18	0.6
Special:		
On-Campus	209	
Off-Campus	403	
Total	612	19.0
Grand Total	3217	100.0

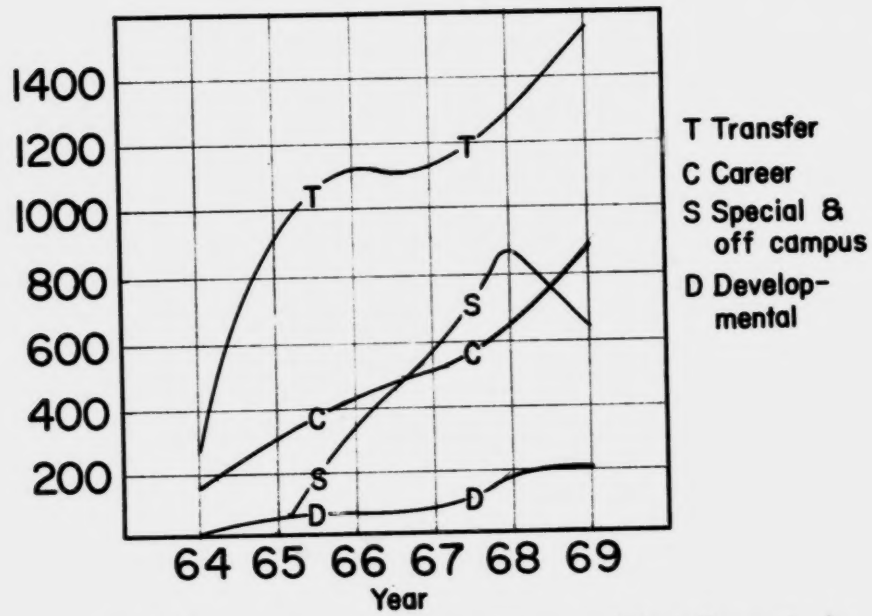

FIGURE 4 Fall Semester Enrollments by Curricular Groups from 1964 through 1969.

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969
Transfer	266	896	1090	1062	1276	1484
Career	162	316	423	520	631	878
Developmental	1	51	71	77	197	225
Special	0	45	351	559	846	630

What Do They Think?

Students attending classes on campus in spring 1969 were asked to express their opinions through a questionnaire (4) of educational goals, personal concerns, and various aspects of the College. An analysis of co-curricular activities was made at the same time.

Educational Goals and Personal Concerns

Two goals – "developing mental abilities" and "obtaining vocational or professional training" – were most highly rated (by over 90 percent of the respondents). These goals were considered most important by students in all curricula. Third was "learning how to enjoy life" followed by "earning a higher income" and "developing personality." The goals of "moral standards," "a desirable marriage," "a satisfying philosophy," and "becoming a cultural person" were rated important by more than 50 percent but were considered less important than those mentioned before. These responses appear to represent a student body that is vocationally and pragmatically oriented. Special students, who tend to be older, rated desirable marriage more highly than the other groups. Developmental students rated "becoming a cultural person" more highly than the other groups.

Seventeen personal concerns, several related to social-psychological development, and several of a contemporary nature, were also rated. Figure 5 shows the list of personal concerns and their ratings by students as very important or important. Self-development (occupational preparation, passing courses, relations with others) claimed the attention of most students. Issues related to problems of society received generally lower ratings. Preparing for marriage and family life rated very near the bottom. Social problems of race and poverty ranked above war and over-population. Thus, we find that students are concerned most with immediate relationships and interactions with their environment.

Participation in Student Activities

Nearly 20 percent of the students participated in student clubs or organizations; fewer in fraternities or sororities, intramural athletics, volunteer service groups. Student publications, faculty-student committees, student government, and dramatics each drew less than ten percent of the students.

Several findings summarize the pattern and extent of participation in student activities by various groups of students:

1. Transfer students were the most active, and special students were least active.
2. Overall, male students participated proportionally more than females in student activities. Males were more active in

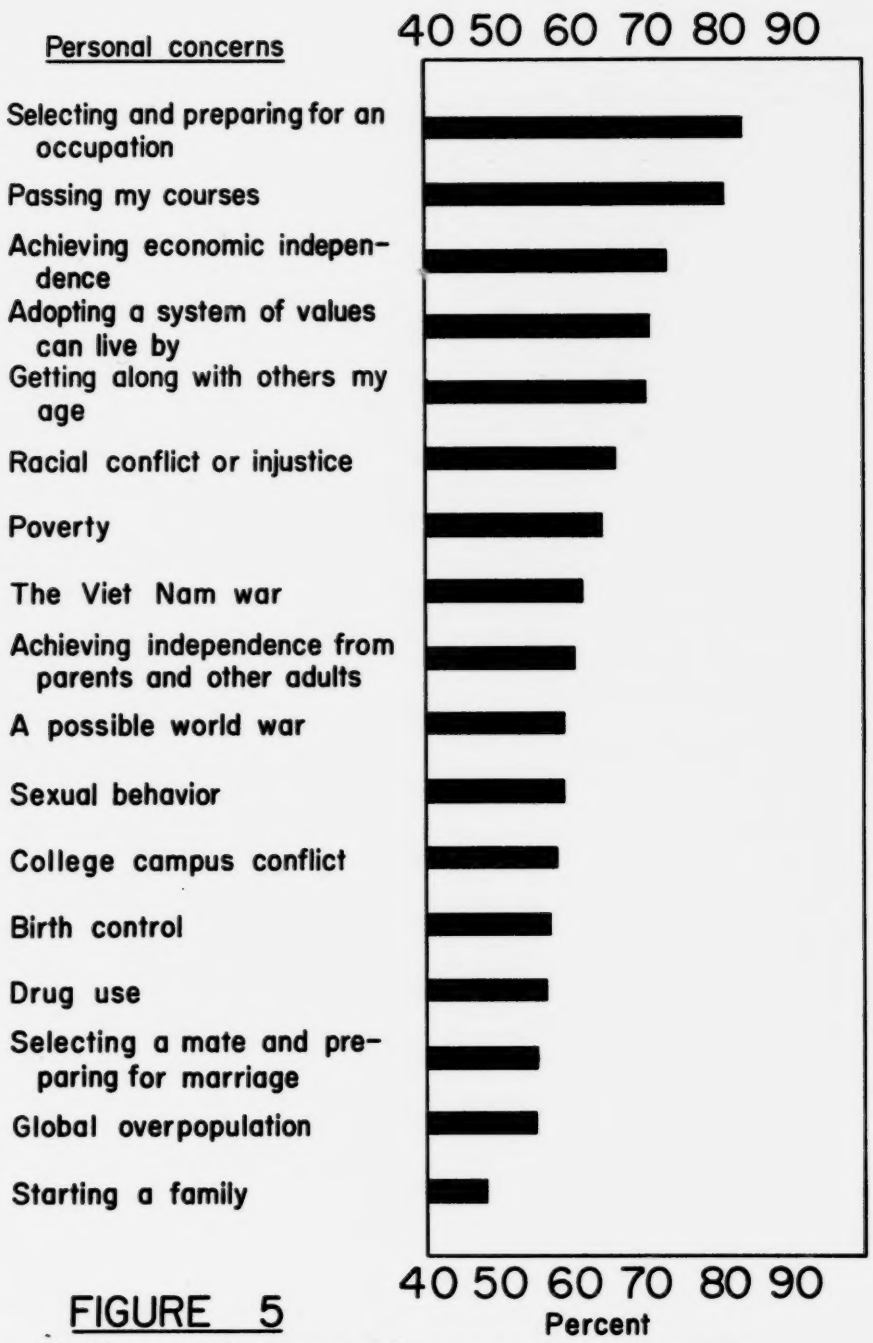

FIGURE 5

Ratings of personal concerns as very important or important.

athletics, females more in student publications, student clubs, and organizations.

3. Students of age 21 participated more than older or younger students. Very little participation was reported among students 30 years of age or older.
4. Students with all levels of grade achievement took part in student activities.
5. Sophomores who expected to receive their degrees in 1969 were twice as involved in activities as were freshmen.
6. Part-time students were not much interested in student activities.
7. Students whose fathers attended college participated far more than did those whose fathers had less education.

Evaluations of the College

General education subjects were rated by students as highly beneficial in the following rank order: English, social and behavioral sciences, mathematics, life sciences, physical sciences, humanities, and French or German. There were some variations in the ratings of general courses by the several curricular groups.

Differences in the ratings of general subjects appeared among the various curricular groups. The social-behavioral sciences and mathematics were rated low by secretarial students. Business career students rated physical and life sciences low. The students in engineering-technologies rated social-behavioral sciences low with mathematics and physics being rated high. Police science students rated mathematics and English courses low with the social-behavioral sciences and humanities being rated high. The students in the transfer curriculums rated all general subjects, with the exception of mathematics and physical sciences, higher than the total group. Developmental students rated English much higher than the total group and special students rated most subjects, with the exception of humanities, higher than the other groups.

Courses, instruction, and the library were rated as superior or good by three-fourths or more of all respondents. Personal counseling and academic advisement were rated as superior or good by just over half the respondents. Lowest ratings were given to advisement in employment or transfer and to the student activities program.

In their ratings of the student body, students rated themselves fair, interesting, attractive, sociable, and friendly. Over half agreed that the students at the College are a diverse group. Approximately 40 percent of the students rated the student body as being apathetic.

Students were asked to describe the experience they valued most and the one they found most disappointing at the College. Responses indicated that opportunities to learn, to interact with others interested in learning, and to interact socially appear very important. Students were most disappointed with the attitudes, participation, and behavior of the student body. To a lesser extent, they were concerned with classes, courses, and instructors.

In response to the question "Would you recommend Harrisburg Area Community College to a person who is considering enrolling in the same program you are in?" 91 percent of the students answered "yes." Males were slightly more favorable than females, married persons more so than single persons, persons with higher GPA's more than those with lower GPA's, freshmen more than sophomores, veterans more than non-veterans, part-time students more than full-time students, older students more than younger ones, and students with low levels of father's education more than those with better-educated fathers.

And After Harrisburg Area Community College?

Information for this section was taken largely from two studies designed to learn about the activities of former students, both graduates and non-graduates, and about their evaluations of the College (5, 6).

Description of Former Students

The number of graduates from the several curricular areas for each year from 1966 through 1969 is shown on Table 2. In all, 1114 students have earned associate degrees from the College. Of these, eight-tenths were graduated from transfer programs and two-tenths from career programs.

Comparing graduates and former students who did not earn associate degrees, minor differences were found in the proportions of males and females, in their marital status, but not in their ages. There were proportionally more females among graduates than among non-persisting former students. Four-tenths of the graduates, and

TABLE 2

DEGREES GRANTED BY CURRICULAR AREAS

Curriculum	Year of Graduation 1966	1967	1968	1969
Transfer:				
Liberal Arts*	82	91	94	87
Police Administration and Police Management	0	7	18	32
Pre-Engineering	3	4	9	16
Pre-Teaching	30	67	66	102
Business Administration	24	41	60	59
Career:				
Civil Technology	1	7	8	8
Electronics Technology	3	6	6	15
Electronic Service and Merchandising	0	1	5	3
Industrial Drafting	0	0	3	10
Secretarial: Executive, Legal, Medical	11	10	15	12
Business Management and Accounting	14	14	9	11
Office Studies	0	1	1	3
Retailing	0	9	8	9
Hospitality-Food Service	0	0	4	6
Data Processing	0	0	0	5
Public Service	0	0	0	1
Teacher Aide	0	0	0	1
Total	168	258	306	380

*Includes Life Sciences, Communication and the Arts, Math and Science, and Social Science.

one-third of the non-persisting former students, were females. While the majority of both graduates and non-graduates were single, there were proportionally more single graduates than single non-graduates. Nearly two-thirds of the graduates and nearly six-tenths of the non-graduates were single at the time of the study. Just over eight-tenths of the persons in each of the two groups were age 24 or below.

Former students who did not graduate were enrolled in curricular programs as follows: six-tenths in transfer programs, nearly three-tenths in career programs, under three percent in developmental programs, and eight percent as special students. Three-fourths of the graduates are from transfer programs, and the remaining one-fourth are from career programs. Comparatively, there were proportionally more graduates than non-graduates from transfer areas. These data suggest higher rates of attrition among students in career areas than in transfer areas.

Information was collected from graduates and from non-persisting former students about their activities since leaving the College. It is important to bear in mind that the two groups of students were enrolled during the same period at the College.

Considerable differences in the activities of the two groups were found. One-half of all graduates were full-time students, one-third were employed full-time, less than one-tenth were in the military services, and one-twenty fifth percent were housewives. Comparatively, two-tenths of the former student non-graduates were full-time students, nearly one-half were employed full-time, two-tenths were in the military services, and three-twenty fifths were housewives. Within each group, females reported full-time employment more than males, and within the group of graduates, males reported themselves as full-time students more than females.

The number of credits completed by former students who are non-graduates was fairly evenly distributed, ranging from a low of 6 or fewer credits to a high of 61 or more credits.

Employment

Two-thirds of the employed graduates and eight-tenths of the employed non-graduates had jobs in the tri-county Harrisburg area. Over nine-tenths of the graduates and just six-tenths of the non-graduates reported job titles that were judged to be congruent with their former curricula at the College. Graduates also reported higher salaries. Median salaries for male and female graduates were $6,793 and

$5,399, respectively. For non-graduates, the median salaries for males and females were $6,444 and $4,705, respectively. Graduates were generally satisfied with their present jobs. Comparable data were not obtained from non-graduates.

Continued Education

Three-fourths of the graduates reported attendance at four-year colleges or universities either full-time or part-time. Just one-third of the non-graduates reported continued college attendance. By spring 1969 over one-third of the transfer graduates reported that they either expected to receive bachelor's degrees that year or had already received them. Comparatively, under one-tenth of the former transfer students who did not earn associate degrees at the College expected to receive their bachelor's degrees in 1969 or had previously earned them. It is notable that over one-third of the graduates and over four-tenths of the non-graduates reported participation in employer-training programs or some other type of non-collegiate continued education.

Evaluation of the College

Former students who did not earn associate degrees at the College were asked to indicate their primary educational goals when they were first enrolled at the College and when they last attended. Two-thirds had as their goal an associate or higher degree. Additionally, seven percent reported the goal of improving their employment or career skills, eight percent indicated general education or self-improvement, nine percent checked clarifying educational goals, and three percent wished to improve learning skills. Very little overall change in stated goals was apparent from the time of their initial enrollment to the time of last attendance. Only one-third of the non-graduates reported that they had achieved their original educational goals but, probably because of changes in goals, one-half reported that they had reached the goals they held during their most recent period of enrollment.

Among non-persisting students the most frequently checked reason for leaving the College was "to attend another college," followed by "volunteering or being drafted for the Armed Forces," "employment," "completed their objectives," "lack of finances," "marriage," "lack of interest," and "inadequate achievement." In rank order, males listed: armed forces, attendance at other colleges, and employment. Females checked: attendance at other colleges, employment, completed their objectives, and marriage.

Former students who did not earn associate degrees at the College rated seven general subjects in the same rank order as did current students and graduates, as follows: English, social and behavioral sciences, mathematics, humanities, physical sciences, life sciences, and French or German. Their ratings were generally somewhat higher than those of current students, but lower than those of the graduates.

From seven-tenths to over nine-tenths of the associate degree graduates rated their education at the College as superior or good, based upon the following factors: technical knowledge and understanding, job or learning skills, interpersonal relations, and self-understanding. Comparable information was not obtained from former students who were non-graduates. Proportionally, somewhat fewer of the former students who did not earn associate degrees at the College than graduates or current students answered "yes" to the question "Would you recommend Harrisburg Area Community College to a person seeking to complete the same program you studied?" However, the differences among the recommendations by the three groups were slight, ranging from 92 to 86 percent.

It is also of interest to note that over four-tenths of the non-persisting former students reported that they planned to return to Harrisburg Area Community College for further study. When this group is added to those non-persisters who reported attendance at senior colleges or universities, the number of true "drop-outs" was reduced to about three-tenths of the entire group of non-persisting former students.

Need for Further Study

In order to help the College better identify and meet the needs of current and potential students, additional exploration should include the following:

1. Further studies of present student sub-groups, to focus upon reasons for success (and non-success), personal goals, and special student needs. Such sub-groups may include developmental students, adults, special students, black students, low income students, etc.
2. Studies that compare our current students to potential student populations of both traditional college age and older adults.

3. Studies of the various educational needs of potential students.
4. Studies to determine the extent to which Harrisburg Area Community College is serving the educational needs of certain community and cultural sub-groups.

Research studies in themselves are not enough; they should lead to program innovations. For this to occur, research questions should be formulated through intensive participation of faculty members who are concerned about program changes. This combination of research and program development will improve the ability of the College to "meet the changing needs of students."

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